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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 20, 2007

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**Governor Patrick Files Bond Bill Authorizing
Investment in Land Conservation, Bridges and
Recreation Facilities**

*Legislation provides unprecedented support for land acquisition,
upgrade of park and beach facilities, other capital assets*

BOSTON – Friday, December 21, 2007-- Governor Deval Patrick today filed legislation making an unprecedented commitment to land conservation and investment in transportation infrastructure and recreational facilities operated by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

The \$1.4 billion Energy and Environment Bond Bill is nearly double the size of authorization from the last environment bond bill, passed in 2002, and is in line with Governor Patrick's commitments to protecting open space from development and enhancing recreational facilities for all Massachusetts citizens. The funding authorization is based on the Administration's five-year capital investment plan and related debt affordability analysis published in August.

"The Commonwealth needs parks, farmlands, and recreational facilities that are second to none, in order to attract new residents and visitors, and enhance our quality of life," said Governor Patrick.

"This bond bill advances Governor Patrick's priorities – land conservation and upgrading of assets in the care and custody of our state parks agency," said

Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Ian Bowles. “It provides the bonding authority to give the citizens of the Commonwealth the great open spaces and the great parks, beaches, and recreation facilities they deserve.”

The 2008 Energy and Environment Bond Bill nearly doubles the authorization made in the 2002 environmental bond bill – and more than doubles the investment authorized in assets under the care and custody of DCR, the statewide agency responsible for parks, beaches, and forests, reversing a past pattern of neglect.

The bond bill provides \$665 million in borrowing authority for infrastructure and park assets. This bond authority includes \$250 million for design and construction for DCR bridges in dire need of repair and reconstruction. Bridges likely to receive attention under this bond authorization include the Woods Memorial Bridge in Everett and bridges in the Charles River Basin, pending the results of a sequencing study to determine the optimal order of repair and reconstruction. Also included in this bonding authority is \$75 million in borrowing authority for urban parkways, and \$213 million for other spending on state parks, urban reservations, harbor islands, hiking and biking trails, swimming pools, skating rinks, and campgrounds.

“Every visitor to state parks, forests and beaches has seen the effects of years of underinvestment in these great places, which provide recreational opportunities for millions of residents and draw visitors from around the country,” said Frank Gorke, director of Environment Massachusetts and director of the Conservation and Recreation Campaign. “A great state needs a great park system, and restoring our park system to greatness begins with this strong environmental bond bill. The Governor’s commitment to DCR in this bond will get us pointed toward clean, safe and accessible parks and beaches.”

For land conservation, the bond bill authorizes \$355 million, up from \$250 million in the 2002 environmental bond bill, allowing the administration to meet its goal of investing at least \$50 million per year under the five-year capital spending plan announced in August. The five-year projected spending plan represents a 65 percent increase over annual land protection spending in the past four years, and 24 percent over annual spending from 1993 to 2003, adjusted for inflation.

Spending on land preservation cuts across agencies and programs, but going forward will reflect Governor Patrick’s three priorities:

- Commonwealth Urban Parks: visionary urban parks located in neighborhoods where outdoor recreation is lacking
- Commonwealth Habitat Reserves: saving the remaining large, undisturbed blocs of natural habitat for future generations and as destinations for “green tourism”
- Commonwealth Working Landscapes: preserving agricultural and forest lands as viable enterprises that also maintain the rural landscape of Massachusetts

State-funded land conservation programs leverage a great deal of investment in land protection by private land trusts and municipalities. Based on past experience, Governor Patrick's commitment to at least \$50 million a year in state land acquisition and conservation restrictions should leverage an additional \$75 million annually in municipal, land trust, federal, landowner gifts, and other private fund raising. In addition, conservation restrictions obtained by towns and land trusts working with conservation-minded landowners, which may reach 10,000 acres this year, often abut state protected land, adding another \$40 million in land conservation associated with state land programs.

"Many communities are seeking to preserve their defining landscapes before they're overwhelmed by development pressures," said Whitney Hatch, Regional Director of The Trust for Public Land. "We find that communities are stepping up to the plate, but more often than not, a state matching grant is an essential piece of the conservation puzzle. We need this bond to replenish those grant programs. We thank Governor Patrick for this wise proposal to invest in our irreplaceable resources, and we hope the Legislature will quickly approve a new environmental bond."

"It is a bold move for the Patrick Administration to file the largest environmental bond in the Commonwealth's history. We especially commend the minimum of \$50 million annually dedicated to land conservation," said Mass Audubon President Laura Johnson. "Because we are currently losing more than 40 acres of open space per day, this investment is critical to aid the quickly closing window for land protection in Massachusetts."

"This important proposal will greatly improve the Commonwealth's ability to conserve land and address long overdue repairs in our parks," said Sen. Pamela Resor, Senate chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture. "I look forward to comments on the proposal as we work with the administration to act on this bill."

"This document, our first full bond in six years, sets the stage for our environmental work over the next half-decade," said Rep. Frank Smizik, House chair of the Joint Committee. "The Governor's bill looks comprehensive, is generous in its bottom line, and puts us back on track after years of neglect. I'm particularly pleased to see authorization for subjects like climate change adaptation, land preservation, dam removal, and water supply protection."

The \$1.4 billion of authorization sought covers the estimated five-year spending amount and provides a reasonable level of flexibility to fund additional spending for environmental assets in the event that the Administration determines that the financial capacity exists to increase the state's investment in our environment over the five-year period covered by the bond bill.

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